



Neurodiversity Celebration Roundtable with George King – A Reflection

As part of the Disabilities and Allies Network, I had the privilege of organizing a talk with George King, an inspiring speaker who shared his experiences of living with ADHD and overcoming challenges through determination, hyperfocus, and an adventurous spirit. George's story of climbing the Shard in London, his struggles with ADHD in school, and his views on ADHD resonated deeply with me, as I also navigate life with ADHD and dyslexia.

George King's Journey with ADHD

George described his early struggles with focus and school performance, which led to his ADHD diagnosis and subsequent prescription of Ritalin. While the medication helped him concentrate in class, it also brought significant drawbacks—sleep disturbances, anxiety, and a loss of his vibrant personality. Eventually, he stopped taking medication when he found that his passion for climbing provided him with the focus and structure he needed. This was a perspective that particularly struck a chord with me. While medication can be beneficial for some, I've personally experienced the challenges it can bring, from mood changes to the feeling of being disconnected from my own personality.



Turning ADHD into a Superpower

George spoke passionately about how what was once seen as a limitation became his greatest strength. His ability to hyperfocus enabled him to meticulously plan his climb of the Shard, and carefully calculating every aspect of the attempt. For him, ADHD was not a disorder but a gift that, when channelled into something meaningful, became a powerful advantage.

His advice to others with ADHD was to find what excites them and lean into it. He emphasized communication in the workplace—being upfront about both strengths and weaknesses—and breaking tasks into manageable steps to combat procrastination. This approach mirrors my own experiences; dyslexia and ADHD mean that I sometimes struggle with certain administrative tasks, but by leveraging my ability to think outside the box and approach problems creatively, I can turn these differences into advantages.



Overcoming Fear and Embracing Challenge

One of the most fascinating parts of George's talk was his breakdown of how he manages fear—something that could apply to anyone facing personal or professional challenges. He described three key pillars:

1. **Exposure** – Incrementally facing fears, much like strengthening a muscle.
2. **Mindset** – Reframing thoughts to turn fear into motivation rather than paralysis.
3. **Biology** – Using breathing techniques to regulate the body's physiological responses to stress.

These strategies apply not just in the context of extreme sports but also in the workplace. Managing ADHD can involve self-regulation, creating the right environment, and using tools to enhance focus. Personally, I've found that minimizing distractions and structuring my work into smaller, more digestible pieces makes a huge difference in my productivity.

Workplace Takeaways

George's insights provided valuable lessons for fostering an inclusive work environment. Supporting neurodivergent colleagues isn't just about accommodations; it's about recognizing strengths and allowing people to work in ways that optimize their abilities. Providing space for focused work, encouraging clear communication about working styles, and recognizing that different brains operate in different ways can help make workplaces more neurodiversity-friendly.

Communication is especially important for people with ADHD, as George described in his talk ADHD can lead to difficulties with organization, focus, and task management, which can lead to misunderstandings. Encouraging open conversations about working preferences and potential challenges helps create a supportive environment where individuals feel valued and understood.

Final Thoughts

Organizing this talk was an incredibly rewarding experience. Not only did it provide a platform for an engaging and eye-opening discussion, but it also reinforced the importance of celebrating neurodiversity rather than seeing it as a barrier. As someone with ADHD and dyslexia, I left the session feeling more empowered to embrace my own differences and advocate for the strengths they bring to both my work and personal life.

George's final message was clear: ADHD is not a weakness—it's a unique way of thinking that, when harnessed correctly, can lead to extraordinary achievements. His story serves as a reminder that success comes in many forms, and sometimes, it's about climbing your own version of the Shard—whatever that may be.



By Alexander Harridine